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CARICATURE IN AMERICA.

A LOCAL weekly, commenting on caricature in America and England, observes: "The maker of funny pictures in America has from time immemorial had a hard fight for existence. The best caricaturist America ever possessed nearly starved to death. His name was John McLenan, and he belonged in Cincinnati. He was to America what John Leech was to England. His talent was quite as human, brilliant and versatile. His best work was done for the Harpers and on *Vanity Fair*, and no work has since been done to equal it. He spent all of his working life in art in New York, and died here, in poverty and misery, about fifteen years ago. The last time the writer saw him he was sitting on a doorstep down Broadway in a pelting sleet storm. He had rheumatic gout and had been overcome by it while on his way to a valentine publisher's in Chatham Street with some drawings he had to deliver in order to get a few dollars to keep his wretched household in Brooklyn afloat. He died penniless, and the artists of the newspaper press made an auction of his sketches among themselves to raise a little money for his family."

There is a grim truth in this statement. The humorous artist, in New York at least, finds life anything but a bed of roses. A few exponents of the art do fairly well because they hold salaried positions on one or another comic journal. With the exception of these, A. B. Frost is probably our only caricaturist who approaches a competency by his earnings, and he gains it less as a caricaturist than by his more serious illustrations in black and white.

"Mr. Frost," says our contemporary, "is the best humorous artist we have had since John McLenan. He is a better draughtsman and a more completely equipped artist than McLenan was, but their veins of humor are very similar. McLenan belonged to the boisterously Bohemian era of our literature and art. Frost belongs to that of good clothes and fine studios. The geniuses of McLenan's day drank nothing weaker than whiskey, scorned the tailor and abhorred the barber. It was their misfortune, but it was part of the time, when a certain social stigma rested upon all irregular professions. Since society has taken to making a lion of the *Litterateur* and the artist they have been taught the value of personal decency. I often see pictures by Mr. Frost in our exhibitions, and they show that he has resources capable of making a painter of him as well as a mere pictorial humorist. But he suffers from a defect of vision which prevents his appreciating color at its true value, and will, consequently, be known to posterity by his work in black and white. His series of sketches illustrating the misadventures of the pet cat that took rat poison will be immortal."

Frank Bellew is probably the oldest of the comic artists of New York still in active life here. He became identified with humorous literature in the days when John Brougham published his *Lantern*, and has contributed countless drolleries to our press. An indefatigable worker, fecund of ideas, and ready in their execution, he still is far from enjoying the prosperity that should belong to a talent as diligent and deserving as his. The fickle public, ever eager for novelties, has grown to demand newer servants to its amusement. The present taste seems to be either for the broad burlesque, best represented by the effective and unpolished skits of Fred. Oppen in *Puck*, or the inanities of humor, illustrated with the politest care, such as form the chief attractions of *Life*. Indeed, the tendency of all the papers just now is to raise caricature from the mere illustration of an idea into the dignity of a serious drawing. In the past the idea was everything, and it atoned for the grossest crudenesses of execution. Now execution is everything, and the idea merely an excuse for it.

ALFRED KAPPE'S "Rent Day" has been purchased by Mr. Thomas B. Clarke, whose collection consequently includes another thoroughly representative American work.

THE art department of the revived New Orleans Exposition opens next month. The art director, Mr. Wendell Stanton Howard, has returned from Europe with a number of striking works collected during the Summer. They constitute about half of the display, the rest being supplied by native productions. The exhibition will only be about half the size of its predecessor, which was altogether too large. Eight acres of the fine arts would test even the capacity of New York; applied to New Orleans it acted like a club. It simply stunned its victims.

GEORGE W. BRENNEMAN'S studio will be illustrated and described in the December ART UNION. Mr. Brennenman possesses one of the quaintest and most picturesque studios in New York, as his pictures of it will demonstrate.

THE Palma Club, a social organization in Jersey City, opens its new Club house on the 17th of this month with an art exhibit under the management of the well known connoisseur, Mr. Wm. T. Evans.

THE Society of American Architects has issued its circular of invitation for contributions to its exhibition, in connection with that of the Salmagundi Club next January. The arrangements for the reception of works are the same as for contributions to the Salmagundi itself, and will be found elsewhere in this issue of THE ART UNION. The local committee consists of Messrs. H. O. Avery, C. L. W. Eidlitz, Richard M. Hunt, R. H. Robertson, William B. Tuthill, Prof. Wm. R. Ware and F. C. Withers, and the address of F. A. Wright, the Secretary, is 149 Broadway, New York City. Sub-committees have been formed in Boston (6 Beacon St.), Chicago (115 Dearborn St.) and Philadelphia (302 Walnut St.), where local inquiries may be made.

ST. LOUIS ON THE PRIZE PICTURES.

THE chief local interest in the collection is naturally attracted to the large painting by Alexander Harrison, "Le Crêpuscule," one of four which were awarded prizes and which by lot fell to the St. Louis Museum of Fine Arts. It is the only one of the prize pictures about which no question can be raised in regard to the wisdom of the award. "The Last Sacrament," by Henry Mosler, is also a prize picture, and I will warrant that no one could have been more astonished than the artist who produced it when he learned that it had received a \$2,500 prize. A priest with two boy assistants is descending the stone stairway leading from a humble house after administering the last sacrament to a departing soul within. The work is hardly equal to the standard of Mr. Mosler's reputation. A still greater mystery is the picture by F. M. Boggs, "Off Honour," also one which drew a prize. The conviction would seem almost inevitable that Boggs received the \$2,500 because Boggs painted the picture. Mr. Boggs is a young artist of power and has met with astonishing success, and in this instance at least he has presumed upon his reputation rather than upon the quality of his work. He first exhibited at the Salon in 1880, and the following year his "Place de la Bastille" was bought by the French government, an honor not calculated to diminish the conceit of a young painter. The following year the government also bought his contribution to the Salon, and this evidently turned the Boggs' head, and instead of striving for a higher ideal, he painted out of his mind, and then the Salon jury feeling over kind to our countrymen, administered a rebuke which it is hoped has had a salutary effect, and instead of recommending his work for honors, skied it. The Prize Fund jury would have shown better judgment had they skied this picture instead of awarding him \$2,500 for it. The merit of Mr. Gifford's picture, which also received a prize, consists in the luminosity of the sky, which is admirable. The lower half of the cross is extremely commonplace, and the blasted tree, dark against the light, is a trick as old as painting itself. Mr. Gifford is one of the very best of American painters and his prize picture is not up to the average.

A second Prize Fund Exhibition will be held next spring, and if practicable, it is proposed to extend the number of prizes to ten, of \$2,000 each; and what is better still, these sums will be awarded by the vote of the artist exhibitors, a plan much better than the one adopted at the initial exhibition. Ten medals will also be awarded by the same process to other pictures, each medal having a value of \$100. American sculptors will also be eligible to compete both for money prizes and medals.—*St. Louis Spectator*.

THE BIBLIOPHILES' FEAST.

OLD books, and bindings old and new, are displayed in bewildering and tempting variety and splendor on the shelves and tables of E. F. Bonaventure since his return from Europe. Since he entered the field in which he is now the admitted head in America, no collection as extensive and valuable has been in Mr. Bonaventure's hands. In addition to these acquisitions made for himself, he purchased for the collections of Mr. Robert Hoe, Mr. Brayton Ives and others of our bibliophiles whose trusted agent he is, many works of rare quality and antique value. His present acquisitions have been gathered in France and Germany, which are now the chief sources of supply for fine books and bindings. A catalogue of them has just been published.

The gem of Mr. Bonaventure's present collection is a small quarto, oblong in form, a book on lace, made up of woodcuts and printed by Casar Vecellio in 1592. The book itself is an extremely rare and interesting work and perfect in condition. The binding, however, is the jewel of the casket in which the dealer preserves it sacred from dust and moth. It is of mosaic design, tooled by hand on a warm-gray morocco, and as beautiful in its simpler double as in its external dress. The tool-work on this cover is, literally speaking, a work of art. The binding is from the hand of the famous Thibaron Joly, among whose masterpieces it belongs. Another magnificent work is a massive copy in two quarto volumes of the celebrated Curmer edition of the *Evangelists*, bound in silver, engraved in renaissance design to match the inside pages. On the ground work of ivory of each volume appears a fine line engraving of Christ in the first and the Madonna and child in the second. The massive clasps and back are also of silver. A copy of Dorat's "Les Baisers," perfect in condition, is more than perfectly bound by Loric. The certification label sets its cost at 3,000 francs, unbound. Finer still in binding is a "Daphnis and Chloe" of 1745, covered in mosaic by Padeloup. Mr. Bonaventure also has a "Manon Lescaut" of 1753, with a charming binding by Petit, two volumes valued at 1,800 francs, and a "Caesar's Commentaries," in an excellently preserved binding by the immortal Grolier. A ponderous folio, the "Chronicles of Nuremberg," dated 1494, shows the three blank leaves so precious to collectors, and is embellished with illuminated initials and emblems. One can readily accept the dealer's statement that it is the finest copy known and the only one possessing the illuminated capitals. A copy of Durer's "Little Passion," with thirty-seven wood-cuts, and a magnificent folio manuscript missal, are among the other trophies of his summer's trip to Europe. A specially interesting feature of the collection is a folio set of 124 portraits, by Vandyck, fifteen of which are impressions from the plates etched by Vandyck himself and left unfinished by the engravers who completed the others.

THE SOUTHERN ART UNION.

New Orleans, Oct. 28th.—A meeting of the ladies' executive committee of the Southern Art Union took place yesterday to perfect arrangements for the classes during the winter. Miss Ida Haskell, of Chicago, who taught the art classes so successfully last year, has been re-engaged, and will arrive this week, beginning work next Monday. Miss Haskell awakened much interest and enthusiasm among her pupils last year, so that they look forward with much pleasure to a renewal of study with her. She is also to take a limited number of free pupils. The library of the Art Union is constantly growing in size and value, and nearly all the new books donated by Miss Maud Howe have been placed upon the shelves.